# NERINDA

*by*

NORMAN DOUGLAS

Although *Nerinda* was first published in 1901, is was issued pseudonymously, and it is only within the past few months that this record of the disintegration of a personality has come to be known as the work of Norman Douglas. Written at Pompeii thirty years ago it was, says the author, "to be my first, and last, excursion into the domain of fiction. I took time over the business and confess that the composition gave me an infinity of trouble. I confess, likewise, that I was pleased with the result, vastly pleased.

"One must have been easy to please in 1899."

*From the* AUTHOR'S NOTE

$2.50

# NERINDA

*by Norman Douglas*

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## IN THE BEGINNING

*by*

*Norman Douglas*

"It is Douglas through and through. Its every page is richly fraught with his ironically tolerant spirit, his mellow tone, his vivid coloring, his uncanny aptness of phrase . . . . A tale of exquisite workmanship, of perfect polish, wrought for open minds."

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— Percy Hutchison in *The New York Times.*

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*by*

NORMAN DOUGLAS

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TO

NANCY CUNARD

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NERINDA

## NERINDA

*Capri, March* 20.—It was a Homeric day. The atmosphere trembled with love and light. How happy I would be if I could divest myself of that sense of loneliness . . .

*Capri, March* 21.—We spent the afternoon on the summit of our favourite hill, a magic spot where the spirits of sky and ocean still deign to hold communion with a favoured few. The view at our feet is assuredly one of the most impressive in creation—an ancient world lies spread out in rare beauty of colour and outline, and every inch of its ground is fraught with associations.

Here, surely, on the gentle shores of the Mediterranean, true beauty resides with its harmony of form and colour. The works of man in these regions stand out in just proportion to those of Nature; each supplements the other. Elsewhere she is apt to be hostile to him; she becomes either gloomy or monstrous. At the Pole mankind strug-

gles with the elements and grows into a hero—the light fails, vegetation refuses her aid, he invokes the pale Sun as a beneficent Goddess; in the Tropics his works shrink into insignificance, he is crushed by the vegetation, devoured by the Sun, whom he execrates as a demon. Nature triumphs and man dwindles into a stoic.

Here, surely, on the gentle shores of the Mediterranean, one might be happy!

*Capri, March* 23.—Bertha does her utmost to cheer me up. May she have her reward! The soul of goodness dwells in my sister. But . . .

Shall I be always alone?

An inward voice says, 'No.'

*Capri, March* 24.—Far away, in the blue distance across the incomparable gulf, a promontory lies, faintly shining. It is where Lucullus, the temperate warrior, retired to meditate. And where is now his civilisation? Nothing but ruins.

Doubtless he similarly thought upon the remains of old Hellenic culture that met his eye in every direction, and wondered when the time

would come for his own to decay and perish. For he was not a man to cherish illusions on that score. It is only we who imagine that our state of things will last for ever, because we do not give ourselves leisure to reflect.

That time has now come, and what would be his impression on revisiting these scenes? Would he bow the knee to our ideal of beauty? Would he be eager to adopt our mode of life, our gods, our aspirations? I doubt it.

And Tiberius, the dragon of Capri, whose breath still infects the island? Surely he cherished as few illusions as the other, for his was a yet more plastic mind. Though ruler of the earth, he was not blinded by his splendour; the arch-deceiver remained undeceived. He could read the signs of the times; he knew that his world was even then crumbling to ashes.

Tiberius was an essentially modern type. No wonder that a man of his temper and capacities should have been misunderstood and misinterpreted in an age of ignorant bigotry. He was modern even in his failings; he suffered, in his old age, from a vice—an inhuman lust of cruelty—which some of us moderns can understand and would even imitate but for the fear of a law that had

no terrors for Tiberius. Nowadays we should call him a *neuropathe*. There is a stage when nothing short of the spectacle of tortures and rivers of red blood will prick the jaded appetite. I think I can understand a certain pleasurable emotion arising out of the sight . . .

While we lingered, darkness came on with mysterious rapidity. The sun had set, but the sky, at first, still glowed with opalescent streaks of light that shone like flashing meteors strayed from their path. Suddenly they vanished and there was a great stillness. The landscape at our feet floated in an ocean of liquid pearl. Then a purple veil fell over all things. The evening star glittered overhead.

*Capri, March* 25.—This is what I wrote out for Bertha—a kind of daydream, for I still doze a good deal in the afternoons:—

"When the whole island was covered with luxurious plantations and cool, marble-paved courts, Tiberius, the man-demon, could be seen slowly pacing its terraces, or borne, in cunningly-wrought litter, from one to the other of his pleasure-houses . . .

"He has arrested the bearers at a favourite spot and has stepped out in order to breathe the fresh sea air. He looks about him. An argosy from Egypt comes wafted through the straits laden with corn for Puteoli, and other merchandise. The remotest valleys of the East have been ransacked to produce perfumes and oils for the curled locks of Roman beauties, and many a laughter-provoking Milesian fable is breathed westwards on the lips of the Greek sailors.

"It has entered the bay and an angry line contracts the old man's brow.

" 'When,' thinks he, 'shall I set my foot once more upon Italian soil?' The attendants are dismissed with a petulant gesture, and he walks towards the sunlit theatre leaning on the arm of a slave and regretting the lost vigour of youth.

"Once seated in his ivory chair an irresistible drowsiness overcomes him. Sleepless nights have been his portion for many months; a silken couch has no attractions for one who dreads death at every hour and in every shape. He loathes his self-imposed solitude, and the animated theatre alone invites to repose . . .

"The scene, with his Corinthian dancing-girls, its pillars of Phrygian marble, its background of

leafy garden and blue sea, is fast fading before his eyes . . .

"Tiberius reigns in another world. The imperial purple trails on the ground, and those restless lids are now half closed. A bunch of fragrant daffodils—the morning's offering of fair Theano—is tightly clutched in his withered hand; a sardonic smile hovers about his mouth . . .

"He is dreaming of Sejanus."

I wrote no more, but the strangest part of the dream followed. For Tiberius spoke to me. He said plainly: '*It will come.*'

To what, to whom, did he refer?

To myself?

So be it.

*Capri, March* 27.—Headache: the usual punishment for feeling too well. I am glad Raymond did not accompany us to this country. He is somewhat too boisterous and matter-of-fact.

*Capri, March* 28.—For ten months I have been forbidden to read books or even newspapers—an intolerable restriction. That is why I have only

to-day accidentally heard that the meteoric genius of Maupassant has sunk into the black night of madness; and just at the time when it gave promise of new and milder beauties. His works illustrate the difference between form and formalism. Alas! that fatal search after new sensations—the too-frequent concomitant of an artistic mind.

And Nietzsche smitten, only the other day, by the same fate.

The lightning, says Herodotus, strikes the tallest trees.

A curious coincidence. The German and French madman each conceived a being who should supersede mankind. Each of these conceptions is characteristic of its respective nation. The Teuton *Uebermensch*, as philosophy, a nugget of gold; the Celtic *Horla*, as art, a priceless pearl.

*Capri, March* 29.—To-morrow we return to our old quarters at Sorrento.

Last night we hired a boat and paid a torchlight visit to our grotto. The effect of the illumination was fairylike. Quick and tall shadows trembled on the moist roof, as though troops of scared sea-ghosts were flitting dismally into the night. Here

and there gleamed fiery eyes. A pungent smell of sea-wrack filled the vault, and the restless waves could be heard as they caressed the dripping walls far away in the recess. They sounded like the heavy breathing of some monster of the deep.

A sailor sang us one of his Neapolitan songs. They are the pure expression of joy of life—a natural product of human life on this divine coast.

Bertha said (I think she must have been quoting): "Where words cease, music begins."

I said: "And where music ceases, kissing begins."

While we listened there rose up from the sea another sound, that certainly spoke not of love of life—its weird tones could be construed into no clear expression of human sentiment. It only recalled a sense of hopeless yearning. It was one of those primeval chants of mankind, whose sphynx-like melodies still linger on this coast and defy the musician's art to record them. The long-drawn notes spoke of submission to a dark fate.

They sounded ominous to my ears.

*Capri, March* 30.—We have delayed a day.

Bertha asks me, *à propos de bottes*, what objection I have to the religion of these people. I tell

her that it offends me at every turn, that it is a permanent source of irritation to me on account of its ugliness and cruelty. That idea of eternal suffering . . .

*Sorrento, Tuesday.*—This is evidently a feast day of some kind. These people, if you believe them, are always on the brink of starvation, yet they find time for two or three feast days every week, They are letting off the fireworks in broad daylight. They cannot wait till it is evening.

*Sorrento, April* 7.—Day after day I sit under this ilex. Once more a calm begins to grow up around me. But it is a calm, a hush, that can be felt. I suppose they were right in saying that my nerves were overstrung; indeed, I can well believe it, for my intelligence seems to have become completely apathetic and numbed as regards certain things. In other matters I am hypersensitive. And one of them is precisely this *calm that can be felt.* I am overcome with loneliness, with the feeling of an unutterable solitude that surrounds me.

"You are having a good rest; cheer up, old

fellow," says Bertha. I nod and smile. Rest for the body, yes; but rest for the spirit?

It has become a nightmare, a positive oppression. It is not distrust of others, or disgust of life, but simply the result of dispassionate reasoning, thus: Whatever I do, I shall never be able to make myself completely understood by my friends. Friends! The very word is a mockery. They listen to what I say, they sympathise, they try to understand! And then I turn away and leave them, feeling that with my confidences I have given away the most precious part of myself. Then follows regret and self-humiliation. Surely, surely others have felt the same?

I feel that it is all in vain. That I am alone, that a gulf—yes, a gulf—yawns between me and all human creatures. Shall I explain once more to Bertha? No, it only pains her and affords me no relief. And if she cannot understand, who can? Let be. One way or another, something must happen soon.

*Sorrento, Saturday.*—Another glorious day. I am always up betimes. Are there moments more divine than those of earliest morning, when some-

thing of the mystery of night, and of its moist caresses, still clings to Nature? Afterwards, this gossamer enchantment is rent asunder by the sounds and glaring light of day. The breeze has not sprung up yet, and I can see the grey olive branches glittering steadily, as though carved in silver, against the sea's unruffled surface of pale turquoise.

The sea has an inexplicable attraction for me. Ever since I was a child I have longed to be a diver and to explore those mystery-peopled lands under the green roof of water. I never look at its glassy depths without a yearning to plunge in. Who knows what lovely beings may inhabit the twilight caverns of the deep?

And then, those grey-pink tufa crags, and the white limestone with its tender mauve reflexes! How much could be enjoyed in this world if—if one were not always, hopelessly, alone!

I know that the severer beauty of Rome, the tender gleams of her golden light and the unspeakable melancholy of the Campagna, is more congenial to Bertha's nature. The beauty of Sorrento is too palpitating, vital and sensual. One longs to grasp it, to absorb it within oneself, to drain it as one drains a cup of wine.

Here I sit every morning and enjoy a spell of sunshine and brief repose. Repose; for my nights are still restless, and when I rise in the morning it is as if I came out of a battlefield. Reading is still forbidden, and Bertha is stern, although I am yearning to unpack my books.

Here I sit and try to construct within myself another and a better world. Why not? But that, I suppose, is why Raymond, whenever he wished to irritate me, used to say:—

"You are not a real scholar, you know; you are only a vague, sentimental enthusiast."

There is, I hope, some sentiment in my composition, but no sentimentality.

What can you expect from him?

These athletic people may be happy, but they are not always reasonable.

My ilex and the olives in this garden alone preserve their primitive shapes. The olives, indeed, seem to enjoy a particular veneration, as in Œdipus on Colonus.

The other plants are cropped, pruned, tortured and mutilated out of all semblance of their former shape. Why do these people love to mutilate everything? Their childlike, or rather

childish, temperament derives pleasure, no doubt, from exercising its authority upon living things.

Where are those pioneers of free thought who woke their slumbering country from her dream of monkish deceits—men who weighed the earth and counted the stars; who peered into worlds unknown, exploring a drop of water as it were an ocean; who enticed the electric spark out of dull metal? Where is the spirit that animated them?

In the *Municipio*.

Where are those artists and philosophers that once shed the light of beauty and wisdom over the whole world?

The artists are now statesmen, whose ingenuity in designing new taxes amounts to nothing short of genius.

And the philosophers are starving peasants, who have to pay them.

Bertha always says I am unjust in such things. She says I must try not to get fixed ideas into my head. Fixed ideas!

*Sorrento, April* 10.—It is positively incredible, if I had not seen it with my own eyes.

In the entrance of this house are two rows of artificial paper flowers, resembling red camelias. This is bad taste anywhere, but especially in a land where so many lovely live plants can be obtained. I always hoped the porter would remove this eyesore.

Imagine, then, my surprise when I saw him this morning, can in hand, busily watering these pots. I went up and examined them closely. *The artificial flowers had been fixed, by means of wires, into the branches of a living plant.*

I fetched Bertha. She was equally horrified. She could hardly believe her eyes. And then she thought I took it too seriously and began to palliate their crimes; but I told her that people who do such things are capable, also, of murdering their own fathers. She said that did not follow. In fact, I am afraid I got into a regular 'state'; one of those 'states' that are so bad for me. The buzzing in my head began again. Then Bertha was frightened and began to agree with me, simply, as I could see, in order to humour me. After a while she said:

"You must admit, Donald, that they have their good qualities, like all other people."

"Perhaps they have," I replied calmly. "I am

always open to conviction. To what do you refer?"

"They understand the art of making mayonnaise sauce."

Ha! Ha! excellent! This anti-climax had the desired effect . . .

Afterwards I became more reasonable and thought a deal about the inhabitants hereabouts and their strong points. That is the worst feature of my temperament; whenever an inquiry is started, my subordinate consciousness broods over it for days and weeks.

And I have discovered another good quality. They can build first-class roads—in fact, they know how to deal with rocks and rivers and to make them subservient to purposes of human intercourse. I suppose this is a legacy from the Romans. If they had only inherited a little more! The sense of justice, for instance. The vilest murders go unpunished . . .

Wherein lies the attraction which murders, and they alone, possess for the human imagination? Is is because, by their vast complexity, and the variety of their motives, they afford us some means of judging of the range of our own weaknesses and passions? That would be the intellectual attraction. And the emotional one is clearly this: that

we feel a kind of relief in contemplating our distance from those depths of misery and depravity where man kills man, from hunger, envy, or simple love of killing. Yes; this simple, innate love of killing is a not uncommon motive, nor without interest for the psychologist and student of morals, inasmuch as it accounts for the origin of many of our social institutions.

Also, besides all this, it would be strange if we did not feel a natural concern in the extinction of a human life, seeing that we must all go the same way. That *something*, which was, what was it? Where is it now? How went it? And when the mystery is made to ooze out, painfully, forcibly, deliberately—the attraction will naturally increase.

Bertha thinks murders quite inexcusable in all circumstances. And she added:—

"They are not only horrible—but stupid." I could not help smiling.

*Sorrento, April* 11.—Headache again. What exquisite shade these olives yield—and yet not veritable shade, but a pearly atmosphere of fairyland . . .

*Sorrento, April* 12.—My eyes never tire of admiring the sublime outlines of Vesuvius. And what a feast of colour during those minutes when the shades of sunset crawl up his inflamed flanks! Then the stupendous dome glows in roseate and amethystine lights, ever changing; it swells and heaves with life; the solid mountain dissolves in golden mist; it is transformed into a web of cloud. You can see through it! A rare illusion.

Leopardi's *Ginestra* is a sympathetic poem. But I can understand Bertha when she says that in reading such poets she cannot dismiss the notion that she is dealing with a race of buffoons. There is certainly a deal of mere intellectual gymnastics about their productions. As to the Divine Comedy —that monument of bigotry—much of its beauty is swallowed up by the detestable sentiments, sentiments that are enough to prejudice any feeling mind against the faith which it proclaims. I cannot bear the idea of eternal imprisonment . . .

The poor prisoners, chained up and deprived of love and sunshine! What foul, outrageous cruelty is enacted between man and man. This is one of those subjects which, when I think of it, makes me shudder with impotent rage. Who can imagine their hopelessness, their sufferings, their solitude?

My own case, surrounded as I am by a wall of loneliness (indeed, every one of us has a citadel, his Individuality, into the inner recesses of which none can penetrate)—my own case makes me sympathise with their sad lot. Yes, this citadel! We pour out our whole heart to a chosen friend; he, or she, listens; then suddenly there rises up before our mind's eye a something which says:—

"It is useless. Stop!"

Then you look, and behold—the gulf!

My private opinion is that Dr. N. . . . suggested my coming to this gay and sunny climate because he imagined I was really suffering from some melancholy delusion about my solitude. That shows how little he knows my character. If I should ever suffer from any delusion at all, it would, I hope, have some more worthy and disinterested object that mere self.

*Sorrento, April* 14.—They talk of a visitation of the cholera. Bertha is not alarmed in the least—no more am I. We must all die at our appointed hour. These great waves of destruction have something weirdly fascinating. They show the absolute worthlessness of the individual before the tribunal

of Nature. He sets up his own standards of just and unjust—what does she care?

A dreadful plague in London was
In the year 'sixty-five,
Which swept a hundred thousand souls
Away—yet I alive!

We have been keeping Pompei for the last—as a sort of *bonne bouche*, but we cannot restrain our curiosity any longer. To-morrow we shall drive there in the cool of the evening. Bertha is looking forward to it almost more than I am.

Scirocco is blowing: Capri and Ischia are veiled in a cap of clouds. I feel unhappy and lonely again, but must try not to let her notice it.

*Night, April* 14.—I have committed a sin, and how angry Bertha would be if she knew it!

The fact is, when a temptation becomes too great, I simply yield. What is the good, I say, of wrestling with the inevitable? At the same time, I take full responsibility for all my actions. I do not lay the blame on others. When I do anything, I do not profess to have been guided by any heavenly

inspiration, in order to impress my actions with the stamp of righteousness. Read the life of any religious enthusiast, Church reformer or sectarian, and you will understand what I mean. 'It was told me, in a dream, to do this and that.' 'An angel appeared to me and said,' etc., etc. I would like immensely to have such dreams. So convenient, you know. They take away all responsibility. Of course, persons whose every action, even the most trivial detail of life, is ordained by Providence—such persons cannot go far wrong. That, I suppose, is what makes pious men so pious.

Well, then, I was seized with an irresistible longing to read something, to be again in touch with the minds of other. So I simply unpacked a book or two. I felt so lonely; I must read or die.

I have been subject to these cravings ever since my birth, and I always know beforehand whether I shall yield or resist. I generally yield.

"Eat and drink!" said Dr. N. . . ., "but don't read. Reading is poison for you."

Those who may read whatever they like can hardly appreciate my impatience at this long separation from my favourite amusement. For I am only allowed a 'little writing; not more than half an hour a day.' What it is to be an invalid!

So I unpacked a few books. I looked into Plato's *Symposium* and compared the translations of Shelley, Jowett and Schleiermacher. They happened to lie together. It will probably cost me the whole night's sleep.

As to Shelley, he is by far the weakest. His version, a transcription, lacks the completeness, the scholarship and Saxon virility of Jowett. The German comes, perhaps, first of all; his translation has a curious kinship with the original. Perhaps his language gives him an unfair advantage.

In what consists Plato's peculiar charm? Why, simply in this: that, with the magic of his language, he makes me think I know more than I do. He exalts my opinion of myself. Is this a deliberate use of his genius? Hardly. Would it be a legitimate use? . . . Call him verbose if you like! Ruskin thinks Shelley 'empty and verbose!'

Yes, I can well believe that *each of us is continually looking for his other half*. And this desire of union is called *love*.

His other half. His other half! Where is mine? Shall we ever meet? Is she near at hand, or is she separated from me by leagues of sea and continent, by ages of time?

Why is there so much unhappiness in this world? Because, alas! not everyone of us finds *his other half.*

This Attic fable seems to call an echo from the most secret caverns of my soul.

Bertha often wonders whether I shall ever find my 'ideal,' as she calls it. I tell her that if my 'ideal' were to appear now, it would be none too soon. I am lonely. That doctrine of elective affinity—what an ugly word for so lovely a thing!

*And when one of them finds his other half, the pair are lost in an amazement of love and friendship and intimacy, and will not be out of one another's sight, as I may say, even for a moment.*

*An amazement of love!* Have I ever been lost in an amazement of love? No. But I feel that such things may be. Therefore they may be for me.

*The intense yearning which each of them has towards the other appears to be desire of something of which the soul has only a dark and doubtful presentiment. There are no words to describe it. But the soul divines that which it seeks, and traces obscurely the footsteps of its obscure desire . . .*

The footsteps of its obscure desire.
Weighty words, these.

*Pompei, April* 15.—The drive was delicious. It was an idyllic evening, cloudless and pure—the sun's heat tempered by a gentle *tramontana* breeze that carried coolness from the still snowy Apennines and waked, out of shady gardens, the fragrance of purple-clustered Glycinia blossoms.

The sublime and the vile touch hands in this country. Men lie sprawling in the gutters, and women, of forbidding aspect, shriek the morning's gossip to each other in hoarse tones across the street. Such voices! Continual bawling from the cradle to the grave has made them unlike anything else in the world. But poverty wears a smiling aspect. The children, though numerous, do not suggest the overbreeding and underfeeding of many parts of England.

Pompei is a revelation. We have only been on a cursory visit of an hour or two. Bertha is enchanted with the town itself, whereas the human element of the place is what appeals most to my imagination.

The small museum with its well-preserved

human remains is a queer spot. One could dream of it. There are wonderfully intact plaster casts taken from the hollow mould formerly occupied by the actual bodies of those who perished in the catastrophe. The process is one of the discoveries of Mr. Fiorelli, who used to be the principal archaeologist.

There was one of a young woman, with eyes half closed as though in pain. It seemed to fascinate Bertha by its life-like grace and beauty.

"Poor girl!" she said at last, after standing entranced before it. "Chained up in that narrow case! Who can she have been? Perhaps the daughter of some patrician, hurrying away to escape the awful vengeance of her gods. It is revolting," she added, "to expose even her ashes to the gaze of the whole world." A truly womanly afterthought.

I said I thought she looked more like a nymph.

After returning through the temple of Apollo a curious fancy possessed me. I took Bertha with me along the dusty street as far as the modern church of Pompei. Heavens, what a cult has defaced this globe! What tinselly, tawdry, gloomy structures! What a grovelling herd of humanity! Assuredly, these preposterous Semitic conceptions,

this outrage upon the good sense of mankind, can only have been imposed upon a world of free men in a moment of supreme weakness.

Like gipsies, they have stolen, and now claim as their own, the fair child of Plato, and they try to disguise him by disfiguring his features and bedaubing his skin to resemble their own tawny hide . . .

And the superstition, such as it is, has already degenerated into mere form. Where are the cathedrals, the penances, the crusades of earlier days? We laugh at the infatuation of our ancestors. Our cult is a discarded husk, a gilded chrysalis lying on the wet ground, out of which Faith, the splendour-winged insect, has crept to seek a sunnier abode.

Raymond seriously invokes 'the human soul.' The soul! That unhappy word has been the refuge of empty minds ever since the world began.

Bertha and myself have just discussed a well-worn subject—that of marriage; but there is still a note of sadness in her voice. I know what it means: I know well enough what she has suffered ever since B——'s death in those vile barracks. That was four years ago. Will she never be com-

forted? But I respect her grief, and she is grateful for this—grateful and serene, a classical character, that looks upon Life and Death otherwise than the majority of this generation.

I explained to her the meaning of that passage from the *Symposium*. She said that she had always felt it and believed it to be even so. Then she said:

"I can see that you have been reading. You know how wrong it is, and that the least reading may do you incalculable harm just now."

I promised faithfully not to do so again.

In proportion as I grow old I learn to love her gentle nature . . .

I have a presentiment that something will happen—a presentiment so persistent as almost to amount to bodily discomfort.

*Pompei, April* 16.—To-day's visit was more detailed, but my head is yet too full to call the impressions into their proper perspective.

My brain is clouded . . .

There is one thing that cannot fail to strike all visitors to this town—namely, the lavishness of the Romans in regard to their public edifices, and the

smallness of their private houses. They knew what was required for the expansion of intimate family life, for social intercourse as adapted to the climate, for the fostering of genial, kindly conversation—bright courtyards and small rooms. Ay, they knew, the old Romans; they and the Orientals alone have grasped the secret. These vast cheerless rooms of modern Italy, each with three or four doors, they disquiet the spirit; the softer emotions take flight and are dissipated in bleak, empty space. Ah, these *palazzi*, interminable deserts of stuccoed ugliness—fit abodes for suicides: they are another symptom of the disease from which so many suffer—*megalomania*. One wanders about them, oppressed with a sense of solitude . . .

Solitude!

*A propos*, Bertha said a curious thing yesterday.

On our way home she wished to pay another visit to the museum, for it seems to have a great attraction for her. We also talked to the keeper, Francesco by name, an old man, with a kindly and intelligent face.

Bertha looked for a long time at her favourite plaster cast.

"I am sure her eyes were violet," she said at last.

"No," I replied, "they were blue." What made me say that? I cannot think.

"You seem to be pretty well acquainted with her," she laughed. "Whatever colour they were, they must have been lovely."

"She is altogether lovely," I said. "Truth mirrored in beauty."

"Don't be sententious. And yet you are right—for it is strange to think that she is no artistic creation, but an actual human being like ourselves."

"Precisely so."

"I wish she could speak. I am sure I should love her, poor girl! And so would you. Perhaps you would want to marry her! Perhaps she is the ideal you have been seeking! She looks unhappy, and no doubt she had her griefs like—like all of us." . . . And then she broke off sadly. She was thinking of B——'s death.

It is a remarkable fact that women often make sensible suggestions when they least intend to do so.

Why was I not born in those days?

Marriage! I thought again. Yes; but not according to the hideous and debasing ceremonial of our days. Mine should be a flowery rite of joy and

love, an orgy of self-effacement, the very negation of human love.

For what is human love but the apotheosis of self, sordid and vile? And its means! And its end!

Such considerations have hitherto prevented and, I fear, ever will prevent, my viewing the question of marriage in a serious light.

And still it is a subject, in its wider sense, upon which I could become enthusiastic and emotional. For I still take myself seriously . . .

Indifference, lack of faith, lack of enthusiasm—these be the real mortal sins, these be the outward signs of a moral fatigue of the race, these be the cankers that undermine the body social and politic. A strong man should be capable of strong emotions.

*Pompei, April* 17.—A reference to a few pages back shows me that the sentiments recorded in connexion with the church of Pompei were harsh and intolerant, and possibly unjust. May Nemesis, that truly Hellenic personification, be ever before my mind's eye. And let me have the Roman's broad-minded tolerance towards such creeds as

are repugnant to my own sense of beauty and justice.

Who could guess by what quaintly-winding thought-process this confession has found an outlet?

It is a wondrous voyage when one remounts the meanderings of that river Thought, which flows unceasingly, day and night, from birth to death. What dim, half-forgotten landscapes one traverses! 'Is this I,' one wonders, 'who thought and felt thus and thus only yesterday? Only five minutes ago? How I change!'

Well, I was dreaming, as I often do, about the sea; and then, waking into a kind of half-sleep, there occurred to me that most characteristic of all Eastern tales—the tale of Abdullah the Merman and Abdullah the Landman. There is a pertinent moral attached to it, worthy of the consideration of all thinking minds.

Do you remember how the Merman plunges into the deep, and, while the other is already blaming his thoughtlessness for allowing him to escape, returns to his astonished friend with each hand full of priceless gems, rubies and pearls, and jacinths and glowing emeralds? Glowing emeralds! How delicious! And that truly Oriental touch:

'Pardon me, my brother; I had no basket at hand, else I would have filled it for you.' And then their voyage together in the human element. But here comes the defect of the story—it is here that that the Oriental phantasy fails. And this is also that part of the tale which my own imagination loves to fill up!

And the end of this strange friendship?

A religious dispute.

One of them suddenly distrusts his friend's common honesty because he does not share his own particular opinion upon a matter of dogma.

To such an extent are we blinded—and such has been the fate of mankind ever since theology took morality under its wings.

Bertha says I am both obstinate and intolerant. I reply:

"Perhaps. But the blame does not rest with me. Our faults, our virtues, are distilled for us beforehand in the silent laboratory of the past."

"A comfortable creed."

"I have never wilfully hurt a living creature. That is the first law. I am a harmless lover of the spirit of beauty."

"You will find her an elusive sprite."

"That is what attracts me."

"A mere idea?"

I reply: "Precisely. The essence of true love is self-effacement. I have fallen in love with a mere idea. You women are too personal. You have no veneration except for tangible objects. That is why you are never really religious. An idea, pure and simple, never interests you; there must be a man standing behind it."

*Pompei, April* 18.—With infinite trouble I persuaded Bertha to visit the ruins once more this morning. She would have liked to interpose a day and to go for a drive somewhere else. But I insisted and she came. The fact is, I am interested in certain things that will admit of little delay.

Francesco, the old keeper of the museum, who actually sleeps there every night as guardian of the relics, was standing at the door and nodded to us.

We looked at the girl again, but I can see that Bertha is growing tired of her.

"That specimen," said Francesco, edging up to us confidentially and observing our interest—that *signorina* is considered one of the finest and most successfully reproduced. It is as if she could speak! *Molto ben riuscita, ma molto!* Professore Fiorelli

himself admired her most of his whole collection. Look you, there was an artist, Signor Rapino, who made studies of the head for his great Maria Magdalena picture last year—well, he used to say that one could almost fall in love with her, like that young man mentioned somewhere in Lucian. Look at her pretty foot!"

"How they do love to hear themselves talk, these people," said Bertha.

"The poor *signorina* is now imprisoned in a narrow cell, ha, ha!" (I could see that Francesco has no real sense of veneration, or he would not have spoken in that fashion. But lack of veneration is one of the chief characteristics of the natives hereabouts, and a symptom of an exhausted race). "And yet, when she was alive, no doubt she loved to play with her friends, and to walk on the Corso, and to go to the Theatre, and to take pleasure like all of us. Observe her! It is as if she breathed with life. *Pare viva! Pare una cristiana . . .*"

"Look, look!" I said suddenly to Bertha. For it really seemed as if a faint pink flush had, for a moment, suffused her ashy features.

Bertha saw it too. She said it was only the reflection from the red-brown panel of the door.

I envy Francesco living near so much beauty.

We had a discussion about it in the evening, and I pretended to believe that the girl was really alive, and that I was going to marry her. It was quite amusing to listen how Bertha argued with me—she has never acquired the true art of arguing.

"Nonsense!" was all she could find to say.

"You may call it nonsense if you like," I calmly replied. "But I know what I know."

This fortunate phrase, you observe, did not commit me to any opinion, and I kept on repeating it till she became quite angry.

"You repeat these things till you end in believing them."

"I know what I know, my dear."

"Nonsense!"

"Call it nonsense, then. But I know what I know."

"I do wish you would drive that stupid idea out of your head," she said at last.

"Then you ought not to have put it there," I replied. "It was yourself who proposed the marriage."

I kept thinking about this all last night . . .

*Pompei, April* 20.—My brain was too tired to write anything yesterday. I have been thinking the whole time.

We hardly referred to the museum discussion again. Somehow or other it has become a sore subject between us; or, at least, one to be avoided. I think I weary her with my remarks, and she tries to turn the current of my ideas to other matters. At last she declared outright that the girl was nothing but a heap of ashes and that—

"No, not a *heap!*" I retorted, seizing the long-sought-for opportunity. "Don't forget, *form tyrannises over matter.*"

"Yes," she admitted.

"And *love triumphs over death,*" I added slowly.

"Yes."

And then she sighed. I could guess her thoughts. She was thinking of B—— But could she, or anyone else in this world, have guessed mine?

I had carefully prepared the sequence of these two remarks, and I watched their effect upon her. They went home.

I fear I am beginning to take a pleasure in annoying, or at least mystifying, her. I never knew

there was so much capacity for mischief in my constitution.

Bertha suggests that we should go back to Naples soon.

She says I am becoming irritable.

It is really wrong of me to vex Bertha after her untiring kindness and solicitude for me. Why must I do it? Whom have I in the world besides her? Who loves me as she does? Who? No one? Is there indeed no one? Or perhaps . . .

*April* 21, 3 *a.m.*—I have just awoke from a divine dream. I was standing on a beach, all alone, and gazing sadly seawards, and then some one came and whispered, for a moment, in my ear—such truths! Things that I have never heard, and yet knew. How do you explain *that?*

And what were they?

I have forgotten!

And who was she?

Ah!

How shall words, mere words, convey any sense of the utter bliss of those short moments?

Imagine if you can!
As for me—if death be like this, let me die . . .

11 *a.m.*—This was an adventurous expedition. I crept in the grey of dawn, before sunrise and immediately after my dream, in the well-known direction. Bertha knows nothing—so much the better! The dusty, hot, unsheltered path, with its scanty grass at the sides, was invested, in that early light, with a dewy charm and redolent of a subtle fragrance exhaled by the rich volcanic soil.

I imagined myself some lover creeping to a secret meeting with his betrothed. That is a pleasant illusion and can harm no one. Altogether, considering how little harm I do, I am sometimes surprised at the number of those who secretly bear me ill-will . . .

The door was locked; Francesco was evidently still asleep. At last he heard my knocking and appeared in his *negligé*. How funny he looked! Have you ever skinned an owl? No? I have. And this is what his appearance recalled to my mind. Your owl looks large and imposing in his ruffled feathers, but when you have relieved him of his

skin he is transformed into a meek and diminutive pink deformity, with huge eyes. He looks so funny! And Francesco, without his official uniform, seemed to have shrunk into a mannikin that one might crush in one's hand. Indeed, strange to say, I had a curious inclination to throttle him then and there, I know not why. Jealousy, perhaps.

He let me in, somewhat surprised at my early visit, and I wandered round the apartment with an air of proprietorship, as one who has entered his own house. It is so pleasant to have a house of one's own . . .

"The signore can make himself quite at home," he said, as he took my hat.

I should think so!

Then I gazed at her long and intently. But no! She gave no sign of life—not a sign, not a sign.

She seemed to slumber.

Is Bertha right after all?

I must try to have a good rest this afternoon.

*Pompei, April* 22.—The chivalrous adventure has been repeated, and I am taking a great fancy to these little excursions. But Francesco was sur-

prised and seemed suspicious, so that I was obliged, at first, to wander round the room in a *nonchalant* manner, looking at all the other things and only glancing at her coyly now and then, like a bashful lover, out of the corners of my eyes.

I believe he thinks I came to steal something.

And so I did!

I came to steal a heart.

He asks if he can be of any use to the signore?

I reply: "Perhaps some other time."

This means, I suppose, that he wants money for his trouble. I gave him some, and his humour improved. What weak creatures we are! Then, observing the direction of my glance, he remarked:—

"Fiorelli was indeed a genius—is it not so?"

I told him that I did not care to hear about Professor Fiorelli.

"*Un genio!*" he repeated.

"A man of taste," I corrected.

"*Un vero genio!*" he went on, shaking his old head with conviction. Francesco is becoming decidedly intrusive.

"I do not wish to hear his name mentioned, Francesco. He was a talented archaeologist who did his duty. *Basta!*"

"Talent?" he asked. "We call it—"

"Who are you, obstinate old man, to pronounce on the enigma of genius? Your archaeologist was a clever man, *e basta!*"

"*Un gran genio!*" he repeated, with the pig-headedness of his race. "Yes, you may well look at her, signore. She is as near perfection as art can make her. A divinity! *Pare la natura!*"

"Art, Nature, Divinity, Genius! How you people throw the words about. The confusion in your head, my dear Francesco, would drive me mad." And I felt as if I could have murdered him, I did indeed.

Then, seeing that he looked really scared, I tried to laugh; but I only half succeeded, because, at that moment, a curious fancy entered my head, or rather, an intuitive conviction; the conviction, namely, that if I could be allowed to touch her, for one instant only, she would feel my touch and perhaps—ah, God!—perhaps open her eyes with a look of thankfulness, the thankfulness of a poor prisoner who has found one heart that throbs in sympathy with her own sad lot.

I hinted my desire to Francesco in my most engaging and insinuating manner. It is surprising how humble I made myself. I felt I could do any-

thing, good or evil, to obtain my wish. That, no doubt, is the true lover's spirit.

"*É impossible, caro signore,*" he replied, shrugging his shoulders and pointing at the cap of his official uniform with an expressive gesture.

Then I must try to do without him.

*Pompei, April* 26.—I have made a grievous and well-nigh irreparable mistake. I have told Bertha all—my whole heart, the whole truth. She shook her head obstinately, and began arguing—'convincing me,' as she called it. I told her that the time for discussion was now past. Alas, the gulf—the immeasurable gulf! She even wishes to take me away. She refused to understand me. Then I told her to suspend her judgment for the present, at least. No! Come and see for yourself? No! Then I bowed and left the room. Assuredly I have done my best for all three parties concerned. Three parties? Yes, there are now three of us.

The gulf! But now I am no longer without hope of a comforter. I can afford to lose Bertha who, even in her most expansive moments, never really entered into my ideas and projects.

And what is the truth? Believe it or not, here it is.

All yesterday I had a bad headache and lay in bed. Else I could have written down a good many things that occurred to me which I have forgotten by this time again.

And as I lay, there came another dream to me, wonderfully vivid; was it indeed only a dream? I was away, far away, in a calm purple twilight, under the waves. And a well-known voice pronounced these words: '*Save me.*' She also told me that she was neither Grecian nor Roman, but the daughter of an ocean king. (I always thought so!) . . . And then! And then . . . she whispered in my ear her name, the sweet name by which, henceforth, I am to know her—*Nerinda.*

Surely, as I tried to explain afterwards to Bertha, the mere fact of my knowing and remembering this name proves that this was no idle dream like others. I swear upon my honour that I have never in my life wilfully deceived others; that I never invented this name; indeed, that I could not invent if I tried! But Bertha would not listen. The gulf!

"I suppose it came to you," she said at last.

"It came to me!" I echoed. "Do things happen

without a cause? It came to me! Do things come and go as they please? And if so, why did it not come to *you* instead?"

Then she began to cry.

One thing is quite certain, and that is, that if they all go on ill-treating me in this fashion, I shall have to take to deceit and dissimulation, however unwillingly I may do it.

Listen, now, to what followed; for all this was only a kind of prelude, although, so far as I am concerned, I was not in the least surprised at what then occurred. Indeed, I was thoroughly prepared for it: I may confidently say that I knew it beforehand.

I awoke from this dream, this vision, this visitation, this—visit, at about three o'clock in the morning. That is my usual hour for waking. I felt inspired. Dressing hastily, I crept in the dark along the well-known path to Francesco, and woke him up. The day was barely dawning, and there hovered a yellow-brown mist over the mountains. He lighted a candle, for the interior of the museum was still almost dark.

Now that I am quite calm again I can well understand why Francesco should find me in a state of great excitement, and ask what on earth

had brought me to him at that extraordinary hour of the night?

What, indeed? Here was a dilemma. I had never thought about that. But I was master of the situation instantly.

"The fact is," I explained, hastily inventing a lie, "we are leaving to-day, this very morning, and I wished to come once more and thank you for all the trouble you have taken. I may not have time later on—there is always so much to do at the last moment. Please accept this little remembrance from my sister and myself," and I gave him a bloodstone ring which I happened to be wearing.

Bloodstone . . .

"The signore is too generous," he cried, sincerely moved, and trying to kiss my hand. "How shall I ever thank you both? But then," he added, with a laugh, "you must surely come and say good-bye to Professor Fiorelli's signorina. You have taken so much interest in her . . ."

"She is not Professor Fiorelli's signorina. She is mine."

"As you wish, Excellenza," he replied, with a conciliatory smile.

So far good, I thought.

"Give me a candle, Francesco; and will you please look if the sun has not risen yet?" That was sly of me.

He went out through the half-open door all unsuspecting, and took a turn outside on the stones to sniff the morning air. You see I remember the smallest incident; I am something of an artist in my love of detail.

So far good.

And was it to be farewell? Was my devotion to go unrequited, was my faith, my love, my hope, to be shattered without one sign of recognition?

"Nerinda, Nerinda," I prayed, "do you not remember?"

And the tears fell—ay, they rained—from my eyes. I prayed with the faith that can move mountains, with the ecstatic rapture of a saint. I lost all shyness; what cared I if the whole world were looking on? How I prayed! And how I gazed!

"Nerinda, my heart's desire, my other self—a sign!"

And lo! It happened even as I expected. Her cheeks coloured and her curved lips quivered slightly, ever so slightly, like an anemone flower trembling in the breeze. Life, for one short mo-

ment, flowed through those delicate veins. As for her eyes—I gazed, and methought I looked into another world.

"The sun is rising, signore, and the weather promises . . ."

"Come here quickly, Francesco," I interrupted, even then still ready to doubt the evidence of my own senses. "Now look, Francesco, and tell me honestly: what do you see?"

"*Pare viva* . . ." he began, confused.

"No wonder you are astonished," I said calmly. It was my turn to be calm now.

Ah! I knew it, I knew it, I knew it from the first day I saw her.

And in that moment my plan of action was decided. A path of duty lies plain before me.

I left the building elated, triumphant, convinced.

Then, in the course of the morning, I told Bertha all. I thought she would—

I was interrupted in my writing just now. By whom? By a visitor. And do you know who she was? Ah!

I thought Bertha would wish me joy. But no. She has been disappointed in her own love, and

I suppose it is natural enough that she now wishes to spoil my pleasure. Natural, but not agreeable. The gulf! I shall make no more confidences.

She proposes to go to Naples to-morrow, but I propose to propose something else. *Nous verrons.*

*Villino dei Fiori, Castellamare, May* 2.—The reign of dissimulation has begun. I have atoned for my mistake by a brilliant stroke of policy. I told Bertha that Naples was too noisy and unhealthy, and that my nerves were not yet in as good a state as they should be (those were my exact words, and they seemed to weigh with her!) and that the purer air and country life of this place would do me good. So we have hired this little villa which suits me admirably. A hotel would have been impossible for my purpose. I pretend to have forgotten Pompei, and I succeed beyond all expectations. Whenever she tries to test me, by referring to it accidentally (as it were), I laugh and treat the whole matter as a joke. Ha, ha! As I do not yet read anything myself, I have persuaded her to read aloud to me Fouqué's *Undine*, which she does all the more gladly because it is one of her favourite stories. She little

guesses what attracts me so particularly in this tale!

It is in this garden that I sit and think, and think, and elaborate my plans. She could never imagine my real motive for living here! But I must be circumspect, and stealthy as a cat.

I am like a general on the eve of a battle, reconnoitring the ground and spying out the enemy's camp.

Who is the enemy?

The whole world.

I cannot go to see Nerinda at present, in order not to attract Bertha's attention. But to atone for that, Nerinda appears to me almost whenever I wish, so we meet after all. And this is how I have come to know the truth—*she loves me.*

The more I think upon it, the more I hesitate whether to weep or to laugh. Listen. Bertha professes to love me. She regrets bitterly that I have not yet found my ideal. At last I find my ideal. Then she becomes angry. She even mistrusts me. Surely there is something radically wrong with this world.

*Castellamare, May* 3, 3.30 *a.m.*—My eyes frequently wander in the direction of Pompei. But

that is forbidden ground at present, although I have made exhaustive surveys of the roads. *Kommt Zeit, kommt Rath.*

*May* 4, 3.25 *a.m.*—

> I arise from dreams of thee,
> In the first sweet sleep of night . . .

One kiss—one kiss! And if it costs my life. Besides, I must discuss certain plans with her before taking decisive action. But why my life? Why not that of another? Do the stars care what little atom is extinguished here below?

Who is he that dares to interpose between me and my immortal Love? I will make one more attempt.

It has been an ignominious failure.

I found my way in the grey dawn to Pompei along the small field-paths already marked out for the final triumphant entry. Not a soul saw me. I was obliged to swim the river, bearing my bundle of clothes in one hand. Who cares? I should know the path now in the very darkest night.

My life has grown full of chivalry and romance.

How beautifully fresh the air! It did my head good. What relief to be in physical contact with Nature! I am weary of men and their treachery.

Francesco was there and opened the door as usual. He seemed surprised to see me. I went straight to the point.

"Is it impossible for you to open that case? *Even after what you yourself saw the other day?*" I added with emphasis.

"Impossible, dear sir."

"I would give you enough money."

"I have a wife and five children."

"I will provide for them."

"It would cost me my official position to accept your proposal, dear sir."

"What of that? Supposing it cost you your life to refuse it?" I asked seriously.

"The signore is pleased to joke with me," he replied, smiling. A stupid smile!

I tried to explain, I argued, I begged, I threatened. In vain.

What is to be done with such a man?

We shall see. I have done my best.

After that I wandered about carelessly, avoid-

ing her eyes, for I dreaded to see the look of just disappointment in them.

Assuredly, if I were to name the principal characteristic of these people, it would be their mental inaccessibility. True, they are born with a certain amount of ready knowledge, inherited from more talented ancestors, but any fresh idea, however commendable, however luminous, however self-evident—it cannot enter their heads. They think themselves perfect: another sign of an exhausted race.

My brain feels different to what it did yesterday. Indeed, it feels different every day. I suppose that is as it should be. "*Malheur à qui ne se contredit pas une fois par jour,*" says Renan.

Returned betimes. It is a long walk. Bertha remains unaware of this escapade, and it gives me pleasure to deceive her and to watch her face. Yes, it warms the cockles of my heart.

*Castellamare, May* 5.—Received a letter from Raymond this morning. He is engaged to be married. What a most extraordinary coincidence! Shall I tell him about myself? Perhaps later, when it is a *fait accompli.*

*Castellamare, May* 6, 3.30 *a.m.*—I live in a dream of bliss. I keep my secret as the miser hoards his gold. Who has just been sitting in this chair? The treasure of an empire would not tempt me to let her name cross my lips. Alas, the dreams wear off towards morning . . .

11 *a.m.*—Scirocco again. It blows softly, almost imperceptibly. Islands and continent float in a grey haze. There is a heaviness in the air, a stillness—the stillness of things to come.

8*p.m.*—All living things are hushed. Even inanimate Nature seems to feel the spell.

We walked along the beach in the afternoon. There are some picturesque turret-shaped islets out at sea, opposite the mouth of my river.

Bertha and I are longing to explore them. Thank Heaven that we still agree in something! I imagine they are those mentioned by Pliny, who says that the fish there only eat bread thrown into the sea, and refuse to touch any bait which conceals a hook. Wise creatures! Let me follow your example.

I picked up a water-worn pebble with a distinct female face on it. How came it there?

I showed it to Bertha. She at once detected some resemblance.

"Resemblance to whom?" I asked pointedly.

"Resemblance to the caricature of a human face," she said.

"Not at all a caricature," I told her. "It is a portrait."

And then I threw it away.

There were tears in her eyes.

What a curious girl she is, to grudge me my happiness.

Female jealousy?

Or perhaps it reminded her of someone else. . .

Her character must be undergoing a complete change, it is becoming altogether abnormal; I have noticed it for some time past. But I pretend not to see. I must keep her under observation.

As we passed near the deep harbour, Nerinda was there, pillowed on the curled surface of a wave. There she was—pointing downwards into the depths. Nothing but the sense of a duty still to be performed could have restrained me from plunging in there and then. She loves me! But

I said nothing to Bertha, oh, no! I have learned the lesson, the hard lesson, of keeping my own counsel, of closing my lips when my heart is bursting to communicate its joys to my fellow-creatures.

*Villino dei Fiori, Castellamare, May* 8, 3 *a.m.*— Wind and weather being favourable, we hired a boat to convey us across to those bizarre islets. A Byronic spot.

Bertha seemed depressed, but perhaps it is only part of some plan that she is hatching. I must be on my guard. In proportion as her spirits sink, mine rise. This afternoon I positively surpassed myself in wittiness. I made one or two puns that would have convulsed a saint.

Then suddenly I became sad. Why? Because, near the mediaeval tower on the summit of the rock, there stands a small fig-tree, all alone among the stones. I was sorry for it.

The magic of love! It softens the heart for all that suffers in solitude.

We looked into a little sea-cave near the base of the rock, whose roof was painted with tremulous garlands of light. The wavelets throbbed like

stolen kisses. Nerinda was there. I read her wishes in her eyes: they are my commands. "*Save me.*" This was precisely at 11.35 in the morning. I did not speak to her for fear of Bertha, but I waved my hand. Then Bertha, seeing this, smiled at me, or tried to smile—such a smile! More like a grimace. I always judge people by their way of smiling.

Smile, Bertha; smile, World!

Going home the wind had freshened to a breeze, and I remarked that the waves were tipped with crimson crests. What does it mean? I shall not be long in finding out.

Bertha saw it too and said that it was only in these climates that one could appreciate the sense of Homer's colour epithets. She likes to pose, I observe. This is something new, and ominous. I shall keep a sharp eye on her.

*Castellamare, May* 9, 3.30 *a.m.*—All these days I have been suffering from a bad headache. Better now.

That which is in my heart shall never be committed to paper. Indeed, I feel as if thought alone

constituted a betrayal of trust, a kind of sacrilege. If so, may I be forgiven!

*Castellamare, May* 11.—A final council has just been held, and all the details are settled. The allies have effected a junction. The enemy is in complete ignorance of our position . . .

How my ideas change from one hour to another! They are not fixed, it appears.

What does it all mean? A struggle is going on. There is no retaining my thoughts. Whenever I pursue them, they flit tantalisingly like the phantoms that chase one another before my closed eyes in the interval betwixt sleep and waking. My mind is like a troubled ocean full of eddies and cross-currents and whirlpools, where the recollections are suddenly cast up in flashing pictures, and again swiftly engulfed.

Surely the whole world is mad. Here is Rubinstein, who writes an Ocean Symphony and assures me that he detests the sea! I shall never forget those evenings at Peterhoff. He made me play chess till my head ached. A passionate chess-player. Moltke, too. All generals ought to be chess-players. I am a general.

*May* 12, 3 *a.m.*—A contrary current.

What is the law?

An institution of mankind. Mankind is liable to error.

What is the moral sense of man?

A matter of time and place.

What is the life of man?

Even as the grass it is cut down, dried up, and withered. The microcosm counts as nothing—his blood does but fertilise the soil for coming generations.

> A dreadful plague in London was
> In the year 'sixty-five,
> Which swept a hundred thousand souls
> Away—yet I alive.

I alive! Alive! Why alive? Even so it was preordained.

We have all our appointed tasks, and our appointed life-time, which cannot be prolonged by one second.

Happy are the dead, for their sufferings are ended. Some day—to-morrow, perhaps—this will be said of me. Let it be added, then, that I was not afraid of death, that I died in endeavouring to save others.

And who shall estimate the sufferings, the torture of soul, that one poor human atom must undergo? Ah—my head!

Another current.

Is it right to take the life of man?

Is it wrong?

I am poor—I have but a few shillings in my possession. Then someone comes and endeavours to rob me. I defend myself and kill him. The law acquits me. Beautiful law!

I am poor—I have but one portion in this world, one treasure, one desire. And he who would rob me of my portion—what shall be done unto him?

Ah! Now I understand the meaning of those crimson-crested waves. I alive!

I cannot drive those waves away from my eyes. Doubtless they signify a command.

My father was a soldier and I myself must have inherited soldier instincts; and this idea, in proportion as I dwell on it, has become anything but repugnant or distasteful to me. On the contrary, I reckon it will be pleasant to watch his struggles, to carve him as a dish for the gods, and

to behold the warm blood pouring out of a thousand gushing mouths. I suppose this must be the artist's love of re-modelling the raw material and impressing it with a stamp of his own; the craving of transformation, of making something new out of what was different before. To transform a man into a fountain . . . How I change! I can now sympathise with that love of mutilating living things which I abhorred not long ago. If I could only do it to the accompaniment of a full orchestra! But it must be a peculiar melody, fateful and yet kind. There is a trio in the Seventh Symphony of Beethoven, an orient pearl, gravely glowing . . .

*May* 13.—She has appeared to me with final instructions. We are to meet in the harbour of Castellamare.

How clear my head is! I know I shall succeed. *Yet I alive* . . . . . .

. . . . . .

At last they came to Bertha, the local newspapers, and this is what the Neapolitan *Corriere Partenopeo* had reported to its readers:—

*Pompei, May* 14.—A sanguinary deed was perpetrated last night in our usually so quiet neighbourhood, and its victim is none other than Francesco Sbordino, a Government official, and senior guide to the ruins of Pompei. The locality chosen renders it doubly mysterious.

No details are known at present beyond this, that his body was found, mutilated almost beyond recognition, at the entrance of the local museum, where the unfortunate man has slept nearly every night for the last eight years as keeper of the relics which it contains. These relics seem likewise to have been tampered with. The robbers had doubtless chosen Saturday with the express intention of carrying off his weekly wages, which are regularly paid to him at two o'clock on that afternoon. In this they were disappointed, as he had providentially left the amount with his family before retiring to the museum for the night. Indeed, it seems that they must have been disturbed at their work, perhaps by some noise of a passing country cart, for they omitted to possess themselves of a valuable ring which he wore on his finger—a recent gift from a distinguished foreigner. Universal sympathy is felt for the family of this highly-respected old man, who seems to have had

not an enemy in the world. He leaves a wife and five children . . .

*Naples, May* 15.—Immediately upon the receipt of the news of this outrage, Signor Verde-Grisetti, our most energetic Minister of Public Works, who happens to be in Naples at this moment, left for the spot with some other gentlemen. The museum presented a spectacle of chaotic confusion. Some of the relics have suffered considerable damage in consequence of the scuffle that must have ensued. Lovers of art—and who is not a lover of art in our country?—will learn with regret that one of the gems of the collection, Case No. 12, containing the plaster cast of a young woman reproduced according to the ingenious process of our immortal Fiorelli, is completely shattered—that this *chef d'œuvre*, with its clinging draperies and delicately-formed limbs, is now reduced to a mass of shapeless fragments . . .

*Pompei, May* 16.—Amongst those arrested on suspicion is a certain Antonio Giuseppone of Castellamare, who was formerly employed on the exca-

vations of Pompei, but has lately been dismissed for some reason or other. He was unpopular with his fellow-workmen, and—a significant detail!—is the only one of those arrested who could claim a personal acquaintance with the deceased *capoguida*. There are witnesses who testify that they have heard him using menacing language in referring to the deceased as the cause of his dismissal. For the rest, there seems to be not a word of truth in what he says. This individual (of questionable precedents, as has already been ascertained) did not return to his home on the night of the murder: so much is certain. He claims to have slept in the amphitheatre of Pompei, and to have done this for some time past, in the hope of obtaining re-employment in the morning. We shall see! The mystery must be cleared up—the honour of our town is at stake . . .

*Naples, May* 17.—As a tragic concomitant of the crime of Pompei, we learn that the body which was fished out of the harbour of Castellamare on the 14th instant has been identified as that of the young Englishman to whose generosity the dead *capoguida* was indebted for the ring. It presented

some abrasions pointing to a struggle; the clothing was also torn. An insignificant amount of money —calculated, doubtless, to mislead the police into the belief that it was a case of death by natural causes—had been left on his person. The robbers (for it is now clear that there was a gang of them) may have guessed his wealth to be on a par with his generosity, and, studying his habit of early rising, decided to kill two birds with one stone. The local authorities have instituted a searching enquiry into all the circumstances connected with this affair.

There were various other references to the incident in foreign and English papers, and the end of the whole matter was thus summed up in the words of the *Times:*

2 *July.*—Thanks to the vigilance of the local police, there has been no attempt at a repetition of the double murder, on the 13 May, at Pompei and Castellamare. Travellers, if not deterred by the heat, may be confidently recommended to return to their former haunts. The incriminated individual, Antonio Giuseppone, persistently re-

fused to reveal his accomplices. He will probably be condemned, on circumstantial evidence, to ten years' cellular confinement, followed by lifelong imprisonment in the convict establishment of Ponza.

# AUTHOR'S NOTE

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The disintegration of a personality—it takes time.

Day after day I watched the mischief at work, in the person of my best friend. I failed to divine its import. Who would have dreamed of such a thing? The attack was so insidious, and he so sound in mind and body! *That* I knew as well as anybody else, for we had been inseparable since our schooldays; we had travelled together in Germany, in the Alps, in Italy. At that time we had moved from Dorsetshire to Deeside for the sake of the grouse, and all went well. It was in the 'nineties, the very early 'nineties.

There something must have gone wrong with that clear brain; something must have snapped. Headache, sleeplessness . . . no great harm in that; we are all liable to such trifles. But why had he grown melancholy without a cause, why was he so irritable, and secretive, and suspicious? I thought it strange, and soon it was forced upon me that he was putting on a new character, that some hideous process of *alienation* had set in. More than once he hinted that he was surrounded

by a kind of wall, a wall of hostility; the servants, the other visitors—notably a fat she-cousin of mine, a harmless creature—they were all in the plot. Then more insomnia and a more marked distrust of me: it was a positive obsession. Often I asked what on earth I had done to displease him? He would answer:

"Oh, nothing. You couldn't understand if I told you."

"Look here: something's up with you. What is it?"

"Don't bother about me! Think of yourself."

"There's nothing to think about."

"Isn't there!"

Only on one occasion did he open a window into his soul, and give me a harrowing glimpse of what was passing there. He reminded me that years before, during a stay in Switzerland with his parents, he had met a young English girl to whom he took a fancy; a boyish affair. Returning to our school, he wrote her a kind of love-letter which, at his request, I translated into English. For some reason or other, she never replied. Girls are stupid, we concluded, and forgot her. There were others to choose from! Now, after all these years, he fished this little incident out of the past,

and began to brood over it. He was convinced, he said, that I had deliberately inserted some word, or omitted some word, which altered the sense of the letter and put the girl against him. And how happy he might have been with her! . . . A trivial matter, but not without value as showing the kind of stuff on which a distracted mind will feed.

So the weeks passed, full of tension and misunderstandings. Never shall I forget those walks over the moors—the horrible silences broken by outpourings of ideas so brilliant and yet so incoherent that they made me shiver. And there was worse to come. He began to hear things, and to see things, that were not there. I thought: hallucinations? This looked serious. Was the fellow going mad? And so unhappy all the time! I was the chief enemy now; I knew it by the way he watched me. None the less he kept his secret. He was clever and well brought up; he knew he was my guest. He dissimulated. A certain ominous politeness accompanied him to the doors of the asylum, where they took him in the nick of time, maybe, to forestall some maniacal outburst.

The months passed. He was reported to be improving.

After a couple of years they let him out, apparently cured, and his parents begged me to come and see him. I found him reasonable, but very subdued. A shadow had fallen over him. At one moment he began to whistle a tune. I asked:

"What's that you're whistling?"

"Just a little song between two asylums."

I stayed with them a couple of days and then departed, unconvinced.

Not long afterwards there occurred a violent scene at home, a second internment, and death.

Such an experience, coming at that period of life, was bound to leave its mark. The summer on Deeside haunted me like a spectre. That train of miserable happenings was still pursuing me years later, on the shores of the Mediterranean. How lay the ghost? Perhaps by raising a memorial to my friend, a memorial not for others to recognize but only for myself to remember him by—a commendable method of placating spirits of the dead, and restoring peace of mind to those who survive. What kind of memorial?

And there fell into my hands the *Inferno* of Strindberg, lately published. Whoever reads this book will feel, or ought to feel, a sense of dis-

location.* It is so convincing (if protracted) a study of the borderland between reason and unreason, of the paranoiac temperament as revealed from within, that one questions whether another man will ever again be born with the necessary qualifications for such a task. Surely, I thought, and still think, nobody has yet gone mad with a more lucid brain! As a mere chronicle it attracts the reader with its changing moods, its multifarious and suggestive divagations; it will serve, at the same time, as a textbook for medical men; and that I should come across it just then was obviously an omen, one of those "omens" which were always lying in wait for Strindberg. *Omen accipio.* It gave me the cue. Did I not also possess first-hand knowledge of these things? Could I not produce a human document on the lines of Strindberg?

This is how *Nerinda* came to be written—at Pompei. It was to be my first, and last, excursion into the domain of fiction. I took time over the

* I have seen an English rendering of 1912. It omits the most important part of the book, the Prologue, that "Mysterium"—an artistic inspiration—which strikes the key-note of the whole, though not expressly written for this work. And, of course, the reference to this Mystery has been cut out of the Epilogue. Is this the way to translate?

business, and confess that the composition gave me an infinity of trouble. I confess, likewise, that I was pleased with the result, vastly pleased.

One must have been easy to please in 1899. The chief interest I now find, in glancing through these pages, is not because some of my friend's very words are enshrined in them; that ghost is laid! It is because they contain the seeds of much that I afterwards wrote about the country down there.

Meanwhile came a reaction. I grew diffident as to the story's merits, vastly diffident. It might be all wrong from beginning to end. Yes, it *was* all wrong! Better stick to biology, after all, and contrive some other kind of memorial . . . I was on the point of tearing up the cherished production when an idea occurred to me. Expert opinion: that would settle the question. Of literary men, however, I knew only a single one at that moment—Marion Crawford, who was living round the corner, at Sorrento. I dreaded his steely blue eye. Besides, the reference in my manuscript to the church of Pompei would infuriate him, an ardent Catholic. And then he was a story-teller (so good a one that some of our present-day novelists might profitably study, say, the *Rose*

*of Yesterday* in order to learn how to preserve the three unities, if such trifles still interest them) —he was just a story-teller; what could Crawford be expected to know of the symptoms of "paramorphic insanity"?

Henry Maudsley . . .

It was Maudsley who coined that expression. Here was the expert I needed.

I had been led to his books long ago by Darwin, who often quotes from them. With Maudsley the alienist I was unacquainted; I knew him as the man who helped in so masterly a fashion to clean up the Augean Stables of what was then called psychology. I had tried to understand his technical writings and found that even an outsider can discover therein something of note, such as his remarkable anticipation of the James-Lange theory of the emotions; * of his more popular ones, like *Body and Mind* or *Natural Causes and Supernatural Seemings*, I thought (and, once more, still

* *South Wind*, p. 46. I drew his attention to the matter at a later period, and this is what he wrote (July 15, 1904):

". . . I had noticed with some surprise now and then references to Prof. James's discovery, believing that I had said something of the same kind long ago and that he was not ignorant of what I had set forth . . ."

think) that they ought to be read by every self-respecting Englishman.

Maudsley was my man.

Nothing would induce me to take such a step nowadays. I have lost the grit, the impudence. Then, however, it seemed the most natural thing in the world to ring the bell at No. 12 Queen Street, send up a card, and ask to see the professor. He was alone in his study—I had probably called at some quite unprofessional hour—and gravely pleased, or so it appeared, to give himself up to my concerns. I began to speak of that manuscript . . . it dealt, in literary fashion, with a case of primary madness . . .

"Do take a chair. Make yourself comfortable."

I sat down, and straightway felt at home in the presence of this calm being. His person was lighted up by an inner glow, a steady glow—the kind of glow which one rarely finds among people of the artistic or musical temperaments. It derives, I think, from persistent and disinterested research; it is destroyed, I think, by those worldly trivialities, meannesses, and passions to which those others are unavoidably exposed. I have noticed the same tranquillity, the same air of detached benevolence, in others of his genus—the physiologist Leydig,

for instance, or Francis Galton. In Maudsley's case it was most pronounced. Now he began to talk, and in so pleasant a fashion that we forgot all about the manuscript. He asked about my studies, my travels, my past life; we spoke of religion, of theatres and politics . . .

I thought: "What a charming old gentleman! He is interested in everything on earth."

Simpleton that I was. Only much later did it dawn on me that the charming old gentleman was putting me through my paces; he was probing my mentality and searching for a weak spot, for a chink in the armour. I feel sure that it would not have surprised him in the least if I had suddenly announced myself as the bearer of a confidential message from Prester John.

The agreeable conversation drew to a close at last, and now it would have been only natural for Maudsley to excuse himself from the tiresome task of going through that MS. and to send me about my business. He had devoted a great deal of his valuable time to my case only to discover, in the end, that I was hopelessly sane! A queer sort of patient . . . He did nothing of the kind. Whether because of my amateurish familiarity with his writings, or impelled by some deeper mo-

tive, he insisted on my leaving the paper there. He would write to me in a day or two what he thought of it.

In due course a letter from him arrived. It was dated 30 June, 1899, and said, among other things, that my "imagination was delighted to ecstasize in a final horror. I am not sure," he went on, "that such exercise of the imagination is a healthy exercise. The closer one comes to morbidity in art the more risk there is of becoming morbid. Who was the old Greek player who was so determined to act madness successfully that he went mad at last?

"So much said by way of discharge of medical conscience, I may add that I read your study right off with much interest. The form of aberration seems to me ingeniously and logically conceived and developed. If I criticized its literary presentation I might venture to think that it would be improved by the omission . . ." and here he named several paragraphs that struck him as intrusive and pointless.

*Ingeniously and logically conceived and developed;* that was encouraging; it decided the fate of *Nerinda.* As to those unnecessary paragraphs—he was perfectly right. Out they went!

The daily work which confronted Maudsley must have been prodigious. Yet, from sheer kindliness, he brought himself to read a lengthy manuscript written by a stranger, and to send him a letter of four pages in return. So true it is that the busy man always has time for everything. Later on I sent him *Nerinda* in print, and this is what he wrote about it on the 18 September, 1901:

"The story of Nerinda seems to have been improved since I read it, or at any rate I appreciate its psychological truth and artistic merits better than I did when reading it in MS.

"I admire also the art of your descriptions of scenery which manage to convey the adequate impression without blurring it with over-wording.

"I am afraid the critics won't do you justice—first, because they are incompetent . . ." and he added two more reasons.

Maudsley was not altogether wrong. One of these gentlemen (*Standard*, 26 December, 1901) took me for a woman, and regretted that "she" was not sufficiently well-advised to burn the manuscript instead of printing it. He said: "Her manner is picturesque, but it is artificial, there is nothing first hand about it."

So much for the genesis of *Nerinda*.

ARISE FOR
IT IS DAY.